

wanting to leave for China without us, he attempted crossing into Belgium only to be caught at the border, finally, she found a way out—tickets to Havana, Cuba for all of us on a ship called the *St. Louis*.

"I am not a traveler" is how my mother always described herself. No matter what the circumstances, motion disagreed with her. It was a family joke that she became ill on their honeymoon in Venice when she and my father took a romantic gondola ride. It is no surprise, therefore, that my mother spent most of the *St. Louis* voyage seasick in the cabin. Photographs on deck show my father on babysitting duty with me. Gaunt and strained from his months in Dachau, he manages a smile for the camera, holding me in his arms or on his lap, in one instance with my mother looking on, her sad, small, wan face also attempting a smile.

After Cuba's betrayal and America's rejection, my parents and I were among those passengers blessed with the good fortune of being taken in by England as political refugees. After a brief stay in London, my parents were evacuated to the countryside, to a little town called Spalding, away from the bombing, although I remember well the sounds of sirens warning us of trouble coming, and I remember nights in air raid shelters. Later we moved to Leicester. At first my father worked in the fields—picking potatoes and tulips, I think—but then he was drafted into the British military, and he served throughout the war. He and my mother liked the British and were forever grateful to England for taking them in. Nonetheless, after the war, when my father's quota number came up (he had a longer wait than my mother because he had been born in Poland), we left England for the United States because family was always the central force in my mother's life and she wanted to be reunited with her parents and one of her brothers who had made it here.

For most of my life, I could not have stood at a podium and spoken about the *St. Louis*. It was a subject for the privacy of our family, not material for exposure to public view. For many years, I would have refused an invitation to make a public statement about my family's personal history. It would have felt like a violation of the most sensitive, most private areas of our lives. My family had enough to do dealing with terrifying memories, with the murder of their relatives, the loss of their homes, and their businesses, their way of life, with the wandering to new lands, the relocation and the humiliation that came with boarding in the homes of strangers, the indignities they experienced in depending on the kindness of distant relatives, their struggles to speak, read and write in a new language, earn a living and begin everything all over, reconstruct their lives in foreign places. All of that was the essence of daily life inside my family. It was our struggle, our history, our wounds and adjustments, our lives behind the door of our apartment.

Yet now I do speak in public. I talk to students who call with questions for their class essays and term papers. I answer journalists' queries. I do so because I have come to respect the power and cherish the value of memory, both individual and collective memory. I have come to believe in the importance of preserving memory, bearing witness, educating new generations about the events of history, and trying in whatever ways one can to bring the lessons of the past to enlighten present behavior. I do not know for sure that we learn from the past. I have my doubts that recalling evil can make people good. But at least we have to try. As an act of faith, we have to try.

My own memory of the *St. Louis* is mediated memory, mediated through my parents as they talked for the rest of their lives about those days. The messages and themes I heard repeatedly became my *St. Louis* voyage. The hotel in Hamburg where we stayed before boarding the ship requested that Jewish guests refrain from entering the dining room, stay out of the lobby and hallways, remain in their rooms. The ship's captain treated us with dignity and respect; my parents always said he was a fine, decent man, an example of a good German. People on board were distraught, suicidal. Roosevelt would not let us in; it was incomprehensible, and a "disgrace." England was good to us. And over and over again, etched in my brain was the message that others had not been so lucky, that we had survived and benefitted because chance was on our side.

These days I often think about my mother and father in Vienna in the early years. I strain to imagine what it must have been like for them then, at that moment in their young lives. They had it all—love, strong families, health, economic success, and high hopes for the future. Life seemed to be promising them the best one could imagine, until history's nightmare overwhelmed and blotted out their private dreams. They spent the rest of their lives recovering from that nightmare and coping with its effects. And yet they were the lucky ones. They never forgot that.

My mother had the strong, enduring belief that sheer good luck had saved us. Of course, many people with great power over us had much to do with determining our fate; but we had virtually no ability to influence them. We were a ship of homeless souls wandering the seas at the mercy of forces and powers that had no knowledge of us as individuals and whose interest in us was shaped by their own power dynamics, parochial pressures and prejudices.

The voyage of the *St. Louis* took place after Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass, when thousands of Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues were vandalized as people were terrorized), but before the onset of World War II. Nine hundred and thirty-seven people who thought they had escaped were sent back to encounter the War. Those who went to continental Europe experienced the Holocaust the way the rest of its victims did. For one brief moment they had seen the shores of America and glimpsed freedom. The clarity of hindsight tells us that at that moment people could have been saved, action could have made a difference.

As a human community, how can we develop reliable foresight, the will to act, and the skill to move in the right direction, in the right way, at the right time? Today, tens of thousands of people in great distress stare at us from the front pages of newspapers and from television screens. Victims of humankind's evil impulses and behavior cry out at the last moment of this twentieth century. Their agonies testify to the continuation of a blind and vicious inhumanity we human beings visit on one another. Today, as we gather here to honor the dead, let us cherish the living. As we memorialize the victims of the Holocaust, let us call on the dictates of conscience and morality to find a better way to end this brutal millennium. The great challenge to the civilized world is to remember the past, to learn from it, and *above* all—above all else—to do better.

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF REV. ERWIN E. MOGILKA

## HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 11, 1999*

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Rev. Erwin E. Mogilka who marks the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination on May 28th. "Father Erv's" history is a lifelong testament to devotion to his religion and his community.

Born at his home on the south side of Milwaukee, Erwin E. Mogilka was baptized April 13, 1924 at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee. He attended St. Josaphat Basilica elementary school, received his first Holy Communion on June 11, 1933, and was confirmed on May 13, 1936.

After graduating from St. Stanislaus High School, Erwin Mogilka attended the St. Francis Minor Seminary and the St. Francis Major Seminary from 1942 to 1949. He was ordained May 28, 1949 at St. John's Cathedral by the Most Rev. Moses E. Kiley, Archbishop. Fr. Mogilka held his first Mass the next day at St. Josaphat Basilica.

On July 7, 1949 Rev. Mogilka was assigned associate pastor to St. Adalbert parish, Milwaukee, where he assisted with remodeling the school and church. On July 6, 1961 Rev. Mogilka was assigned associate pastor to St. Roman Parish, Milwaukee, to be tutored under the auspices of Rev. Maximilian L. Adamski. Friends note, however, that Fr. Erv's transfer did not become effective until he completed scraping, scaling and painting the hull of the boat belonging to Msgr. Clement J. Zych of St. Adalbert.

At St. Roman's, Rev. Mogilka supervised and coordinated the remodeling of the school, church, rectory, convent and grounds, and, according to friends, became something of a "con artist" because of his knack to enlist tradesmen to donate their services through which the parish saved many thousands of dollars. And Fr. Erv worked beside them. It was not uncommon to see him climbing the scaffolding in church to the latest remodeling project.

While overseeing the remodeling of the physical plant at St. Roman's, Fr. Erv also was shepherd to the spiritual well-being of the parishioners, administering to the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the poor and the lonely.

On June 17, 1969, Rev. Mogilka was assigned as pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Racine, Wisconsin, where he served until his retirement in 1992. Among the many awards and recognitions that he has received was the 1997 Priest of the Year Award from the Racine Sienna Club.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and humility that I commemorate, on the jubilee anniversary of his ordination, Rev. Erwin E. Mogilka, an honorable and compassionate man, who has done so much good for so many.

STUDENT'S ACTIVISM WINS  
PRAISE**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 11, 1999*

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues the accomplishments of an extraordinary young woman, Sipfou Saechao, a senior at Richmond High School in Richmond, California. Feeling frustrated by the self-imposed racial segregation of her fellow classmates, Sipfou took it upon herself to improve race relations at Richmond High, a school as culturally diverse as any in California. Overcoming the initial pessimism of friends, students and faculty, Sipfou formed ACTION—All Colors Together In One Nation—a student organization which now boasts over 40 active members. ACTION has challenged the students and faculty of Richmond High to confront the often volatile issue of race, and to learn and grow from the experience. As described in the following article, Sipfou's activism has earned her the respect and admiration of her peers, and she serves as a model for young people throughout our country. I know that my fellow Members of the House of Representatives join me in recognizing Sipfou Saechao for her tremendous contribution to the health of her community, and congratulating her on receiving the 1999 Take Action Award.

STUDENT'S ACTIVISM HELPS HEAL RACE RIFTS  
(By Tony Mercado)

RICHMOND.—Somewhere between sips of cola and bites of a crumb doughnut, Richmond High's Sipfou Saechao decided to make a difference.

It was lunch time when Saechao, then a sophomore, glanced around at the clusters of students and noticed something terribly wrong. For a school so rich in diversity, Asian, Latino and black teens kept to their own.

"That was so stupid," said Saechao, now an 18-year-old senior. "They were excluding themselves from learning about people who could possibly make them a better person."

Last school year, Saechao formed the student club All Colors Together in One Nation—ACTION—to help improve race relations at the school. Friends said it wouldn't work. But Saechao's drive has helped mend a racially split student body, and it has brought her acclaim as one of the country's top young activists.

React Magazine, a teen news publication, has named the UC-Berkeley-bound student one of five grand-prize winners at the 1999 Take Action Awards in New York City. The honor carries a \$20,000 scholarship—a prize sought by about 600 students across the country.

Saechao, who immigrated from Laos at age 2 with her parents and brother, said the money brings her dream of becoming an English teacher closer to reality.

"I'm relieved," said Saechao. She was a semi-finalist for the same prize as a sophomore, for her work to educate Laotian immigrants about the hazards of washing clothes and growing vegetables in toxic soil and water.

"I was stressed about how I was going to be able to afford college," she said. "This changes everything."

The magazine, which reaches 3 million readers as a newspaper insert and through

schools, also awarded Saechao \$24,000 to give to the charity of her choice. Saechao, the school's Associated Student Body president, chose Richmond High. The school plans to buy supplies and encyclopedias.

Dennie Hughes, React's senior editor, called Saechao a tireless worker who yearns to make things happen.

"She's one of those people who wants to see what else can become her project," said Hughes. "She educated the Laotian community, it worked, and then she turned her attention to her school to see how she could help there."

Richmond High has one of Contra Costa County's most diverse student bodies. Fifty percent of students are Latino and 25 percent are Asian. Blacks account for 20 percent. Whites and other ethnic groups account for 5 percent.

The trick to fostering unity was getting classmates to focus on being proud of their school, Saechao said. Scars remained from the past, when tempers between ethnic groups would flare and fists would all too quickly fly.

Some friends told her it would be a nearly impossible task.

"I thought she was crazy," said San Saephanh, an 18-year-old senior. "Because of the violence we had a long time ago, everyone at the time was usually separated."

Saechao helped create a forum where students for the first time could talk about what was on their minds. She began publishing a newsletter call ACTION, filled with students' concerns about the school. Many classmates wrote about pervasive gangs and violence, teen pregnancy and discrimination against girls by boys.

Teachers also got into the act, writing about the frustration of getting students to do homework or bemoaning the lack of respect and communication between teens and adults. But they also wrote about encouraging students to stay in school and work together.

"I thought teachers would be the hardest to convince we could change," Saechao said. "They see what we're like every day, so they have certain stereotypes."

Club membership grew from six to 40, with students from varied backgrounds. The climate is still far from perfect, she said, but students and teachers said people tend to get along better now. Some even share the same picnic table at lunch.

"She gained a real reputation as someone who speaks up for what she thinks is right," said Nancy Ivey, Saechao's leadership class teacher. "Her name comes up the most when kids are asked who they admire as a leader."

The ACTION club is planning fund-raisers so it can provide a scholarship to a graduating senior next year. So far, it has raised about \$1,000. Saechao said it just proves what can happen when there's unity.

"It was actually easy for us students to change," she said. "Most were open-minded about the idea. Hopefully, I've shown that everyone on campus can work together."

CONGRATULATING TERRY NAGEL  
ON HER SERVICE AS PRESIDENT  
OF THE NJFRW**HON. MARGE ROUKEMA**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 11, 1999*

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Terry Nagel on her past four years of service as president of the New Jersey Federation of Republican Women. Terry is a stal-

wart veteran of the political process who has fought for her party's values—and promoted the values of our democratic system—for more than 30 years. Her leadership will be missed, but her many contributions will never be forgotten.

As a secondary-school teacher before coming to Congress, I used to tell my students to become politically active in the party of their choice. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat, Independent or member of a minor party, it is important to find the political party that represents your beliefs and then become an active part of the political process. Terry Nagel is someone who has done just that. She is a loyal Republican, of course, but promotes more than just Republican ideals and values. She extols the values of a democratic society and knows the vital importance of an elected government accountable to the electorate. And she always emphasizes that the vote is not just a right but a responsibility—if you don't vote, you have no one but yourself to blame if you're unhappy with government.

Terry Nagel has worked hard to promote her party's candidates—not just women—and has met with tremendous success. While working for men and women candidates alike, she has realized that all issues are women's issues—whether they involve career opportunities or tax rates. Under her guidance, the New Jersey Federation of Republican Women has championed the issues that count with New Jersey voters—a strong economy, good jobs at good wages, streets safe from crime, and welfare reform that works.

The NJFRW grew significantly under Ms. Nagel's tenure, adding chapters in Hunterdon, Warren and Salem counties. The organization participated in the Get Out the Vote campaign in Washington, D.C., increased financial support for candidates throughout the state and urged the State Republican Committee to give the federation a voting seat on the committee. The Federation also played a major role in helping pass the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act.

Ms. Nagel's involvement in politics began in 1969 as a member of the Women's Republican Club of Middletown, where she planned programs and worked as a fundraiser. She became a member of the Middletown Republican Committee in 1975 and served as president of the Monmouth County Federation of Republican Women from 1983–1985. She was named president of the New Jersey Federation of Republican Women in 1995 and became a member of the board of the National Federation of Republican Women the same year. She chaired former Governor Thomas Kean's telephone campaign in the 15th Congressional District in 1985, and has chaired and organized many political events over the years. She has been an honorary delegate to each Republican National Convention since 1998.

Ms. Nagel has also served on the Middletown Board of Public Assistance and the Middletown Recreation Advisory Committee.

Professionally, Ms. Nagel is a former director of children's recreation at the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at New York University. She also directed the preschool program at Exxon's Bayway Community Center. She has also taught physical education at Mater Dei High School and owned her own dance studio. She is a graduate of Panzer College and holds a master's degree in education from New York University.